



West Main Street Ohio River view, courtesy of the University of Louisville Photographic Archives.

HISTORIC LOUISVILLE

PRESERVATION DISTRICTS AND LOCAL LANDMARKS

The River City

CORN ISLAND

In 1778, Louisville's founders settled on a small island, which they named Corn Island, in the middle of the Ohio River above the Falls of the Ohio. A year after their arrival, the settlement of twenty families relocated to the shore and laid out the Town of Louisville on the Ohio. The small town, named to honor King Louis XVI of France who had supported the United States during the Revolutionary War, grew quickly over the next few decades. By the early 1800s, visitors described Louisville as a bustling river port.

RIVER TRAFFIC



Strategically located above the Falls, Louisville was well positioned to develop a thriving, trade-based economy. The Falls, being the only natural obstacle to navigation between western Pennsylvania and the Gulf of Mexico, created a demand for portaging services. Local businesses sprang up to serve the cargo and passenger boats. The introduction of the steamboat, which could move up and down the river with equal ease, and the construction of the Louisville-Portland Canal during the 1830s generated a dramatic rise in river traffic and, as a result, business boomed.

BUILDING BOOM

Louisville rapidly became one of the most important trading centers in the south. The town grew quickly during the early nineteenth century, and in 1828, the Commonwealth of Kentucky incorporated Louisville as its first city. The city's prosperity in the 1830s resulted in a prolonged building boom. The city grid expanded east and south, and elegant public and private buildings began to replace the simple frame structures of the frontier days. Actors Theatre is one of the few surviving buildings from this era of growth.

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Morton and Griswold Emporium circa 1902, courtesy of the University of Louisville Photographic Archives.

MANUFACTURING

The city continued to experience dramatic periods of growth well into the last quarter of the nineteenth century. In the 1850s, the population swelled with the arrival of German and Irish immigrants. After the Civil War, the economy boomed as expanded rail service opened up new markets and the city became a manufacturing center. The Southern Exposition held during the mid-1880s put the city's technological and manufacturing accomplishments in the spotlight.

EMERGENCE OF SUBURBS

The pattern of residential development changed significantly in the 1890s as the electric streetcar opened the surrounding countryside to suburban development. Many of the homes constructed during this period of growth still line the streets of Parkland

and Cherokee Triangle, two of the city's earliest streetcar suburbs.

IMPACT OF THE AUTOMOBILE

The twentieth century saw the arrival of automobiles and large manufacturing interests, and expansion of the suburbs. Just as the streetcar opened new territory for development earlier in the century, so did the automobile. Suburban development increased substantially in the 1950s as new manufacturing plants located in the open land around the city. Residential neighborhoods sprang up to house the workers.

DECLINE AND RENEWAL

At end of World War II, the manufacturing companies dedicated to the production of war material remained and more families built homes in the suburbs. Such growth resulted in a decline in the urban population and the deterioration of urban neighborhoods and the central business district over the next several decades. Revitalization efforts began in the 1970s and continue today. Successful efforts have led to the return of businesses to downtown and homeowners to the city's historic neighborhoods.



Rehabilitated building adapted for a new use in the Limerick Preservation District.

Historic Preservation Milestones

CHEROKEE TRIANGLE

Several recent infill construction designs on the 1400 block of Cherokee Road show how new construction can be a good neighbor to historic buildings.

LIMERICK

Three major development groups to rehabilitate all of the nineteenth-century homes and commercial structures along the 900 block of South Sixth Street. Rehabilitation of the Old Apothecary Building at 601 West Breckinridge also stabilized an important corner of the Limerick neighborhood.

OLD LOUISVILLE

With support from neighborhood resident and the city, a severely-neglected and unsafe apartment building at 1480 South Third Street was sold to a

developer willing to rehabilitate the structure despite its extreme deterioration.

PARKLAND BUSINESS DISTRICT

Local developers renovated six buildings that comprise Parkland's commercial core, giving the buildings new life as retail, office, and residential space.

WEST MAIN STREET

The Louisville Science Center received the American Institute of Architects Honor Award recognizing the rehabilitation of 721 West Main.

INDIVIDUAL LANDMARKS

Many of the city's unique landmarks have been beautifully renovated, including: Roosevelt Elementary, Cathedral of the Assumption, Mary D. Hill School, The Little Loomhouse, Belknap Playhouse, Old Jefferson County Jail, and the German Insurance Bank.

Districts and Landmarks

The City of Louisville designates local preservation districts and landmarks to recognize, preserve, and protect its significant historic and architectural resources.

Designation establishes a process for review of all exterior alterations, demolition, and new construction. This designation differs from the process of listing districts in the National Register of Historic Places, which is primarily an honorary designation and does not involve local regulation. Each district has a distinctive character and significance. Individual neighborhood overviews, available from the Landmarks Commission, provide additional information on the development and architectural character of each district.

WEST MAIN STREET

The site of Louisville's initial settlement in 1779 and home to a large concentration of nineteenth-century, cast-iron, riverfront commercial buildings, West Main Street is recognized for the historic role it has played in the evolution of the city's economy. The district was first designated in 1974.

LIMERICK

Notable for the quality of its nineteenth-century residential and institutional architecture, and its distinct origins as a former Irish residential enclave, Limerick was first designated in 1978.

OLD LOUISVILLE

First designated in 1975, this area is significant as the site of the 1883 Southern Exposition, the city's first suburban expansion, and well-preserved nineteenth-century architecture.

PARKLAND BUSINESS DISTRICT

Designation of the Parkland Business District in 1980 acknowledged the importance of the neighborhood's commercial core, which contains buildings spanning nearly 100 years of development including a design by the nationally recognized African American architect, Samuel Plato.

CHEROKEE TRIANGLE

Recognition of Cherokee Triangle as a largely intact example of a post-Civil War/pre-World War I streetcar suburb led to its designation in 1976.

LOCAL LANDMARKS

The Landmarks Commission has designated over two dozen local landmarks to date. Collectively, these landmarks represent many facets of Louisville's development—civic, economic, educational, cultural, and spiritual—and exemplify an assortment of architectural styles.



1. West Main Street



2. Limerick



3. Old Louisville

Location of Louisville's Preservation Districts



5. Parkland



4. Cherokee Triangle



Preserving Quality of Life

A WEALTH OF RESOURCES

Louisville's wealth of architectural resources reflects its evolution from a frontier settlement to a cosmopolitan city. Decorative cast-iron warehouses, grand mansions, and humble shotgun houses capture a sense of the city's days as a prosperous trading and manufacturing center. Often beautifully preserved, these buildings also reveal the commitment of Louisville's residents to protecting their architectural treasures.

RELIANCE ON PROPERTY OWNERS

Individual property owners deserve much of the credit for the preservation movement's success. Residents regularly support the city's preservation goals by maintaining the unique character of their historic structures and neighborhoods, making repairs when needed, and endeavoring to design additions or new construction that are compatible with the existing context.

One can discover architectural treasures throughout Louisville's Preservation Districts—looking down to lamp post bases and up to the tops of turrets.



MEASURABLE RESULTS

By working together, government officials and property owners have begun to maximize the economic, educational, and social benefits communities can gain from historic preservation.

- ✦ Rising property values
- ✦ Increased community pride
- ✦ Educational opportunities
- ✦ Economic growth through tourism development

FIGHTING BLIGHT

Recognition of preservation as an important tool for community renewal and redevelopment emerged in the wake of post-war urban flight. By the 1960s, the suburbs had drained the vitality from many urban neighborhoods. Activist residents responded by organizing neighborhood associations that aimed to preserve historic neighborhoods as attractive places to live and work.

BIRTH OF THE LANDMARKS COMMISSION

In 1973, the city of Louisville established a public preservation policy and created the Historic Landmarks and Preservation Districts Commission. The Landmarks Commission helped safeguard historic structures within designated areas of the city from indiscriminate destruction and alteration. Combinations of public and private efforts have since succeeded in rehabilitating many once-blighted neighborhoods. The following information presents some of the responsibilities of the Landmarks Commission, Architectural Review Committees, and staff.

- The Commission officially recognizes areas and individual buildings with significant architectural and historic resources by designating preservation districts and local landmarks.
- Architectural Review Committees and staff review all exterior alterations to structures, new construction, and demolition within local preservation districts and for individual landmarks, thereby preventing insensitive changes to existing structures and patterns of development.
- Staff members provide professional design guidance to owners of historic properties and information about tax incentives for rehabilitation.



Landmarks Commission

THE VALUE OF HISTORIC RESOURCES

In 1973, Louisville's Board of Aldermen officially recognized the importance of the city's distinctive architectural heritage and the role that it plays in enhancing community quality of life. The Landmarks Commission, Architectural Review Committees, and staff work collaboratively to ensure that historic structures and neighborhoods are preserved and continue to be valued and utilized as educational and economic resources.

LANDMARKS COMMISSION MEMBERS

The Historic Landmarks and Preservation Districts Commission is composed of eleven members chosen for their experience and interest in historic preservation. The Mayor appoints eight of the members, including a historian, a real estate broker or appraiser, an architect, an attorney, and a member of the Chamber of Commerce. The Director of the Department of Inspections, Permits and Licenses, the Executive Director of the Louisville and Jefferson County Planning Commission, and a member of the Board of Aldermen fill the three remaining seats.

LANDMARKS COMMISSION RESPONSIBILITIES

The Landmarks Commission is responsible for designating local landmarks and preservation districts; establishing guidelines for exterior alterations, demolition, and new construction for designated structures; and developing preservation plans and educational outreach materials. Decisions regarding designation are based on extensive historical and architectural studies, criteria identical to those required for listing of

a property on the National Register of Historic Places, and public opinion voiced during public hearings. The staff assists the Landmarks Commission during this process.

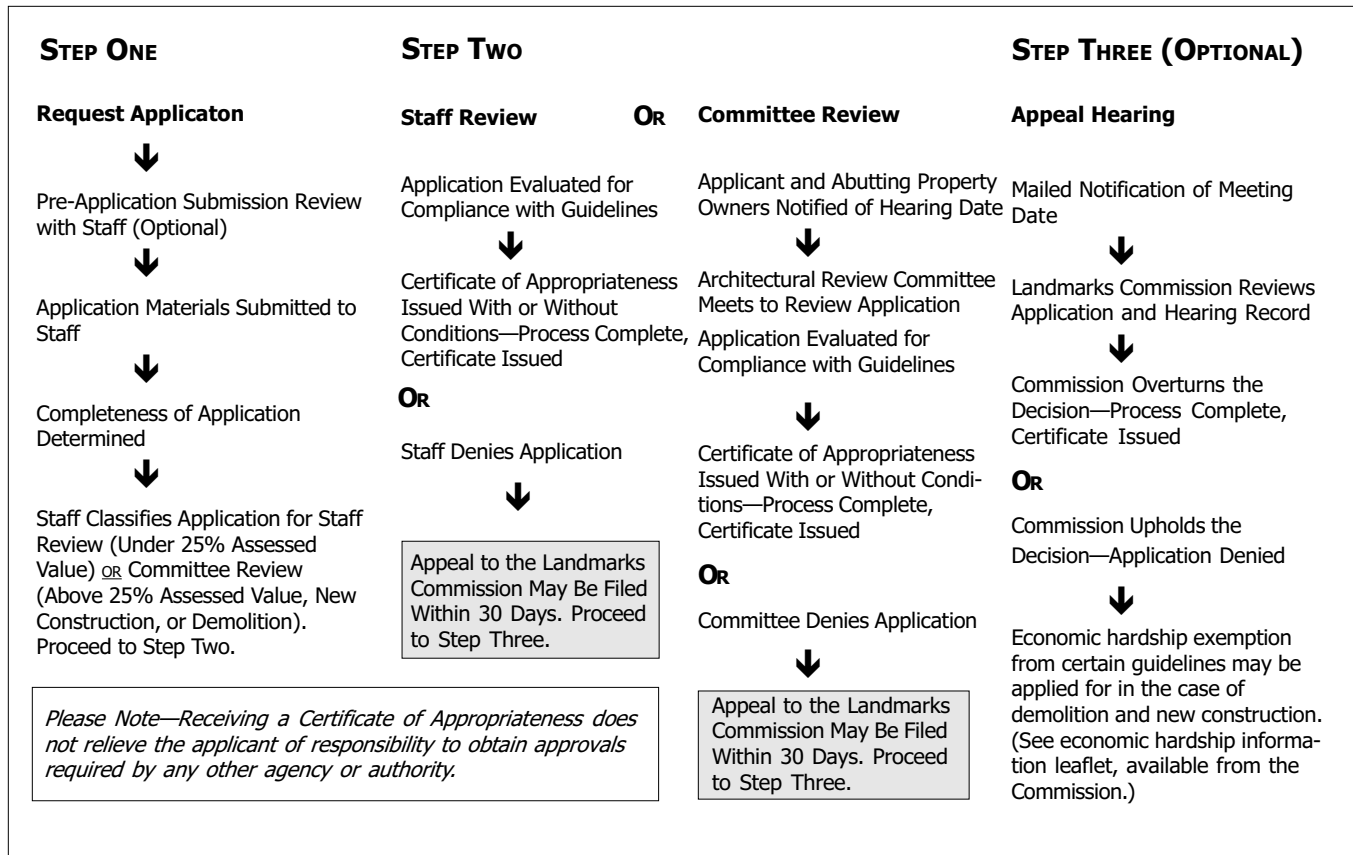
STAFF

Once the staff verifies that an application is complete, the application is classified as requiring either staff or committee review. The staff reviews exterior alterations amounting to less than 25% of a building's assessed value and can issue a Certificate of Appropriateness for such work. The staff also holds pre-application conferences with property owners, administers the ordinance, and provides property owners with design assistance, information on tax incentives for rehabilitation, and historic background on buildings and neighborhoods. Staff members include architects, architectural designers, historians, and administrative personnel.

ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW COMMITTEES (ARCs)

An ARC is appointed for each preservation district and individual landmarks as a group. It reviews applications for projects for new construction, demolition, and exterior alterations amounting to more than 25% of a structure's assessed value. Following its review, an ARC makes decisions regarding the issuance of Certificates of Appropriateness. Each ARC includes the Director of the Department of Inspections, Permits, and Licenses, two Landmarks Commission members, property owners or tenants of the district, a real estate professional, and an architect.

CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS APPLICATION PROCESS



The Review Process

EXTERIOR ALTERATIONS REVIEWED

Chapter 32.500 et seq of the City of Louisville Code of Ordinances establishes a review process for any exterior alteration, demolition, or new construction proposed for local landmarks or any property or structure located within a historic district. Such projects are evaluated according to the City of Louisville's Historic Preservation Design Guidelines.

REVIEW PROCESS

The review process begins once an application is determined to be complete. Staff members classify completed applications as requiring review by staff or an Architectural Review Committee (ARC). Each ARC meets to hear applications on the second and fourth Wednesdays of the month, when they evaluate applications on the basis of the design guidelines. Applicants, as well as abutting property owners, are notified in writing by mail of their hearing date mailed at least seven days in advance. Applicants are encouraged to attend these meetings, since it is an opportunity to discuss the proposed work and provide additional information if required.

CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS

Upon review, the staff or ARC will take one of three actions:

- approve the application as it is;
- approve the application with conditions; or
- deny the application.

A Certificate of Appropriateness certifying that the property complies with the design guidelines is issued if an application is approved or approved with conditions.

APPEALS

If an application is denied by the ARC or staff, an applicant may appeal the decision to the Landmarks Commission. An appeal must be filed within 30 days of the date of the decision. Applicants whose applications for demolition and new construction have been denied by the Committee, and for which a denial has been upheld by the Commission, may request an economic hardship exemption from specific guidelines. The request for an exemption must be made within 10 days of receipt of the Commission's decision. A separate leaflet that provides additional information on the economic hardship process is available from the Landmarks Commission upon request.



Preservation Districts are vital, dynamic neighborhoods. New, infill construction that is sympathetic to the character of surrounding buildings, such as the house seen here, are welcome additions. Landmarks Commission guidelines provide the tools needed to ensure that new designs make good neighbors.

Applying for a Certificate of Appropriateness

THE APPLICATION PROCESS

The Department of Inspections, Permits and Licenses will not issue a building or demolition permit affecting a designated property without a Certificate of Appropriateness. Property owners should submit an application for a Certificate of Appropriateness to the Landmarks Commission along with the following information:

- site plans, photographs, and other graphics to show the proposed exterior alteration in the context of property lines, adjacent structures, streets, sidewalks, etc;
- plans, elevations, and other drawings, and a complete description of the material to be used, as may be necessary to fully explain the exterior alteration; and
- clear photographs of the existing structure or site condition.

Applications for demolition shall also include:

- information establishing that an owner-occupied property cannot be put to a reasonable beneficial use without the approval of the proposed work; or
- information establishing that the applicant cannot obtain a reasonable return from an income-producing property without the approval of the proposed work.

The leaflet on economic hardship further details the type of information that is required.

PRE-APPLICATION CONFERENCE

Before submitting an application, an applicant may request a pre-application conference with the staff to discuss the proposed work and applicable design guidelines.

ACTIVITIES EXCLUDED FROM REVIEW

Certain activities involving landmarks and districts are not considered exterior alterations and, therefore, are not subject to review. A brief list provided below outlines these activities. More detail is available in the City of Louisville's Code of Ordinances (Chapter 32.506).

- ordinary exterior repairs which exactly reproduce existing design and existing materials;
- installation of house numbers, mail boxes, small porch lights, kick plates, or door knockers;
- interior alterations that do not affect the exterior;
- painting non-masonry materials;
- repainting masonry the existing color or an approved masonry color;
- landscaping, tree planting, tree trimming, or pruning;
- rear yard improvements not visible from the street and which do not involve alterations to any structures;
- removal of signage without replacement;
- temporary signage removed within six months; and
- emergency repairs ordered by a City Building Code enforcement officer to protect health and safety.

Design Guidelines— How to Use Them

Design guidelines describe the criteria by which the ARCs and staff evaluate proposed exterior alterations. They are intended to serve as a reference and a resource for property owners, clarifying in advance what is expected. The ARC or staff determines the appropriateness of a project after reviewing all applicable guidelines. The goal is to strike a balance that best serves both the resource and the owner. There is no scoring or minimum number of guidelines to be met.

Design guidelines provide (1) an overview of the distinctive characteristics of each district and individual landmark, and (2) the statement of principles and standards governing exterior alterations to structures or properties of each district and landmarks. The guidelines *do not* dictate styles or specific design motifs. *Instead*, they suggest a choice of approaches for achieving design compatibility.

Available Guideline Topics:

- | | |
|--------------------|-------------------|
| • Additions | • Roofing |
| • Doors | • Siding and Trim |
| • Garages | • Signs |
| • Masonry | • Site |
| • Metals | • Storefronts |
| • New Construction | • Streetscapes |
| • Paint | • Windows |
| • Porches | |



Historic neighborhoods are more than just the sum of their parts—buildings, trees, fences, sidewalks, alleys, and streets—they are tangible expressions of our hopes and aspirations. The Landmarks Commission seeks your help in maintaining Louisville’s preservation districts and local landmarks. An investment in our past is an investment in our future quality of life.

Contact the Landmarks Commission to request appropriate guidelines for your upcoming project.
(502) 574-3501

